

VZCZCXRO9202
PP RUEHAST
DE RUEHSF #0746 1461254
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 261254Z MAY 06
FM AMEMBASSY SOFIA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1976
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHMFIUU/CDR USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY

UNCLAS SOFIA 000746

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [MARR](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KPAO](#) [BU](#)
SUBJECT: BULGARIAN PARLIAMENT RATIFIES DEFENSE COOPERATION
AGREEMENT

REF: SOFIA 0713

¶1. (U) SUMMARY. Parliament ratified the Defense Cooperation Agreement (DCA) between Bulgaria and the U.S. May 26 by an overwhelming majority. The ruling socialist-led coalition and the right-wing opposition parties came together in support of the agreement. Only the ultra-nationalist Ataka party actively opposed ratification. Immediately following the ratification vote, Parliament passed a complementary declaration confirming Bulgaria's foreign policy priority to expand and strengthen its strategic partnership with the U.S. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (U) Parliament ratified the Defense Cooperation Agreement between Bulgaria and the U.S. in a plenary session May 26. The vote was 150-20 with two abstentions. Nine members of Ataka, five dissenting members from the Bulgarian Socialist Party's (BSP) left wing, and six independents voted against. Two BSP MPs abstained.

¶3. (U) During a relatively subdued four-hour debate, MPs from all political parties, except Ataka, spoke in favor of the DCA. Foreign Minister Kalfin said the joint military facilities will increase security in southeast Europe, enhance Bulgaria's interoperability with NATO, and raise Bulgaria's stature. Ataka MPs warned that Bulgaria would become a target for terrorists and that the country was sacrificing its sovereignty, but they were disregarded by the majority.

¶4. (U) A Presidential decree to publish the law ratifying the DCA in the State Gazette is expected soon. After the law has been published, the MFA will send a diplomatic note to Embassy Sofia informing the U.S. that all of Bulgaria's internal approval procedures have been satisfied. This will bring the agreement into force. A number of implementing arrangements associated with the DCA remain to be negotiated between the Department of Defense and the MOD.

¶5. (U) In a declaration approved immediately following ratification, Parliament recognized the DCA as an important factor in strengthening security and stability in Southeastern Europe and the Black Sea region. The MPs acknowledged the joint use of Bulgarian military bases as a central prerequisite for the transformation of the Bulgarian armed forces and the improvement of their interoperability with NATO allies. In an effort to address public concerns fanned by Ataka rhetoric, the declaration noted the DCA's compliance with Bulgarian law and sovereignty. The declaration recognized the exchange of diplomatic notes between the governments of Bulgaria and the U.S. reiterating the commitment that no nuclear weapons will be stationed on Bulgarian territory. The declaration also confirmed

Bulgaria's foreign policy priority to expand and strengthen its strategic partnership with the U.S.

¶6. (SBU) COMMENT. Parliament's speedy committee approvals (reftel) and swift ratification of the DCA, just 28 days after signing the agreement, demonstrate the GOB's strong desire to deepen Bulgaria's strategic partnership with the U.S. EUCOM currently plans to send the first U.S. troop rotation to Bulgaria in summer 2007. (Translation of parliamentary declaration being emailed to desk). END COMMENT.

BEYRLE